



Workshop Report

Research ethics during epidemics with a focus on African values and One Health

October 2021

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Introduction

On the 27th and 28th October 2021 [The Global Health Network](#) supported the 2-day virtual workshop ‘[Research Ethics during Epidemics with a focus on African Values and One Health](#)’ in conjunction with [Africa CDC](#), [PANDORA-ID Net](#), [African Union](#), [CHATHAM House](#) and [UCL](#).

Research ethics in outbreaks of emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases can be difficult to navigate especially in contexts where cultural values of patients and populations often differ, the practice of research is not well-established, and local governance of research is in its infancy or under-resourced.

Designed specifically with first responders to outbreaks in mind, the workshop agenda has been sensitive to the practical constraints on managing outbreaks, what research activities could be feasible, and what responsibilities first responders might assume by being involved with such activities.

While there are many international ethical codes of conduct from which to draw, this workshop brought together regional and local expertise in bioethics, social sciences, and one health researchers to share their reflections on how to integrate ethical research into outbreak responses in Africa and to share experiences of different stakeholders to help think through the key challenges for research in this environment.

The workshop was broken down into topics in two 3-hour sessions over the two days. The teaching was achieved with a combination of short presentations, delegate participation and panel discussions, break up rooms with case studies and Q&A.

Registration

A total of 989 registered for this event, from 62 countries. On the day 506 people attended the webinar.

Registrations countries/regions:

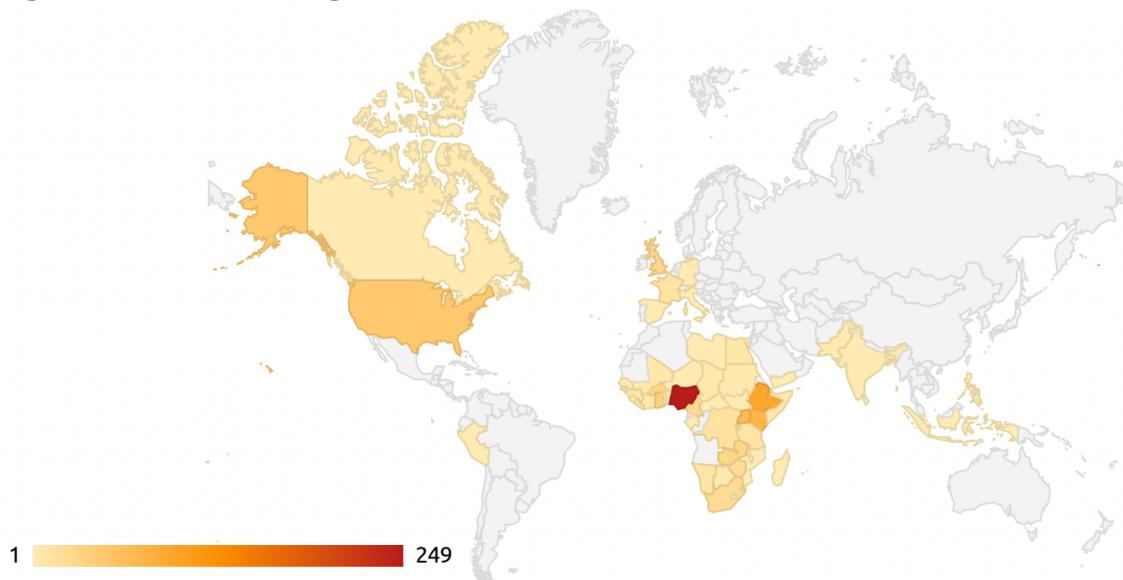


Figure 1. Heat map showing geographical distribution of registrants, covering 62 countries across the world. The scale bar shows how colour corresponds to number of registrants from each country.

Summary of Activities

Day 1

- During the first session, chaired by Prof **Sarah Edwards**, we heard **Caesar Atuire**, **John Barugahare** and **Godfrey Tangwa** discussed upon the question: “*An African research ethics?*”, which was followed by an interactive session with discussion and Q&A.
- The second session featured presentations by **Danny Asogun**, **Francesco Vairo**, **Gershon Chongwe** and **Leonard Mboera** who debate upon “*The importance of integrated research during epidemics and its challenges*”.
- To conclude, **Francis Kombe** and **Devine Fuh** talked about “*Community priority setting, involvement and engagement, science communication*”.

Day 2

- Started with a lecture on “*Ethics, research design, benefit sharing and collaboration*” given by **Ike Iyioke** and **Prof Sarah Edwards**.
- Later, the second session was held by the professors **Blessing Silaigwana**, **Morenike Ukpong-Folayan**, **Jantina de Vries**, and **Paul Ndebele** who talked about their experiences and opinions about “*Trustworthy research: local governance, ethics and scientific review in one health*”.

Also on Day 2, an **interactive session** was held, where the participants were divided into English and French groups (N=8 with fifteen participants in average each) and a [WHO Case Study](#) was presented:

Case Study:

“A deadly form of *viral haemorrhagic fever* has struck your community. *Your health care centre is overwhelmed with work*. Supportive care for patients is very limited, due to lack of resources. The Ministry of Health has managed to secure access to a very limited amount of treatment with an experimental medication. *Also, a clinical trial of an antiviral drug* is being proposed. Animal lab studies have shown good safety and efficacy of the drug against the virus. No studies have yet been performed in humans. The proposal is to test the drug immediately for efficacy in humans. *Your health care centre will perform the clinical trial.*”

Questions on the Case Study:

Regarding the experimental drug: You must consider how you will prioritize access to intravenous fluids and decide whether you will offer the unapproved treatment. Will you provide the experimental treatment? What additional information might you want about the drug or research before your discussions? What obligations does the health care centre have to patients who are not given intravenous fluids and/ or the experimental treatment? Will you allow patients who are not given access to an experimental drug to challenge the decision?

Regarding the Clinical Trial: What research designs would you consider? How should you communicate with the community about the study? Who will benefit from this study, and what benefits will they receive? Who may be harmed? How might any detrimental impacts be minimized? How might you consider recruiting patients into the trial? What other information should be given to the participants when seeking their

informed consent? How will challenges that arise from the dual role of health care personnel and researcher be dealt with?

Back in the main room, a participant from each group presented in few minutes their points of discussion and they received live feedback from the tutors.

Call to Action and Next steps

If you have enjoyed this webinar and would like more information on, The Global Health Network has a discussion forum through which queries can be posted for rapid answers and discussion of ethical issues, different views and values arising in practice can be shared and facilitated:

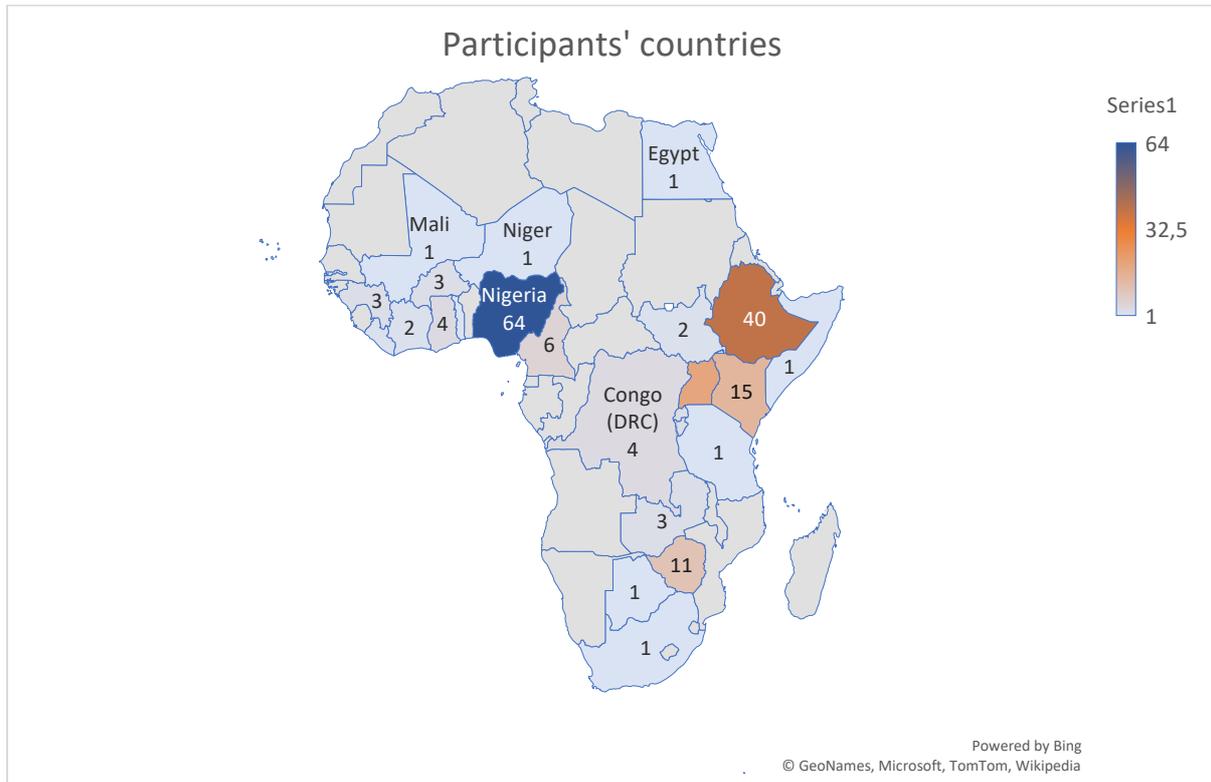
https://africacdc.tghn.org/community/groups/group/r_ethics_workshop/.

You can also get in touch here: info@theglobalhealthnetwork.org

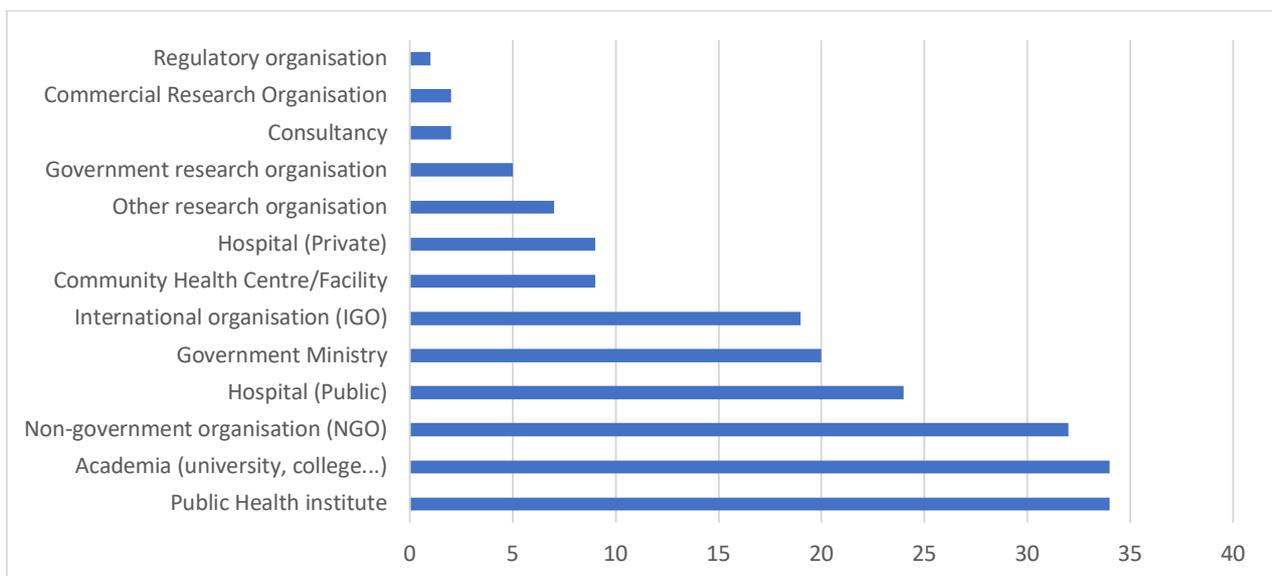
Attendee report

Demographics

There were **506 attendees** and among them, **198 participants** completed the feedback form.

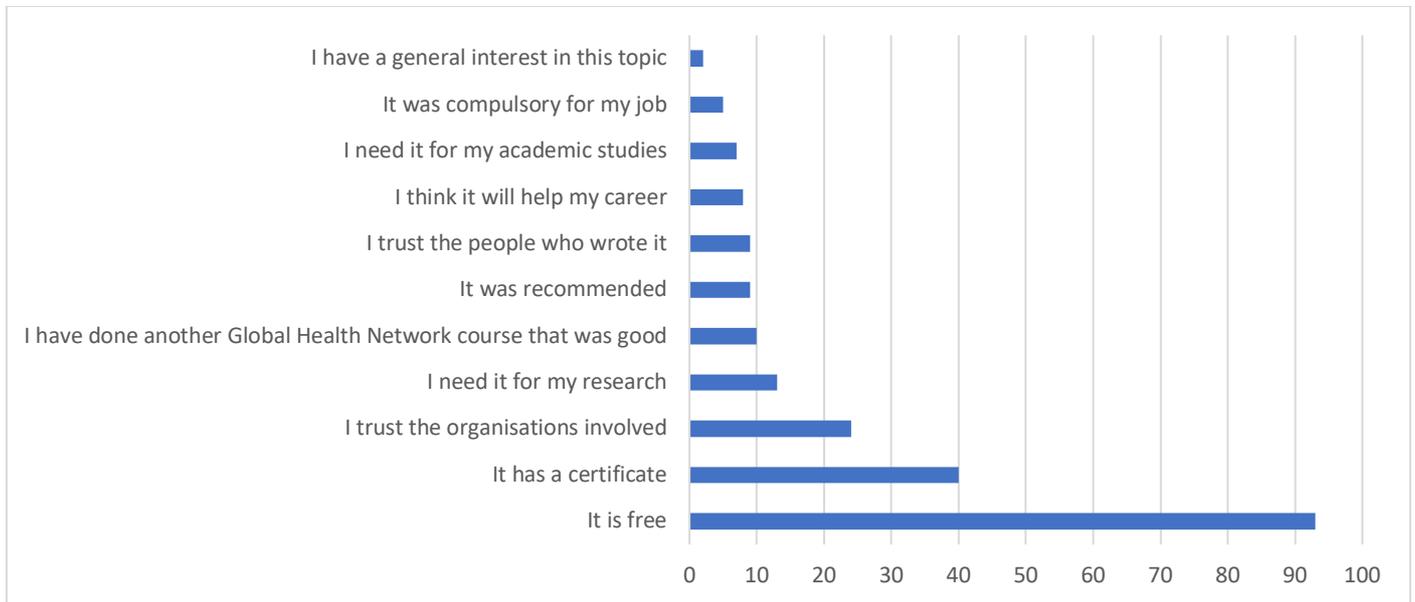


+ two participants from France and one from Ecuador.

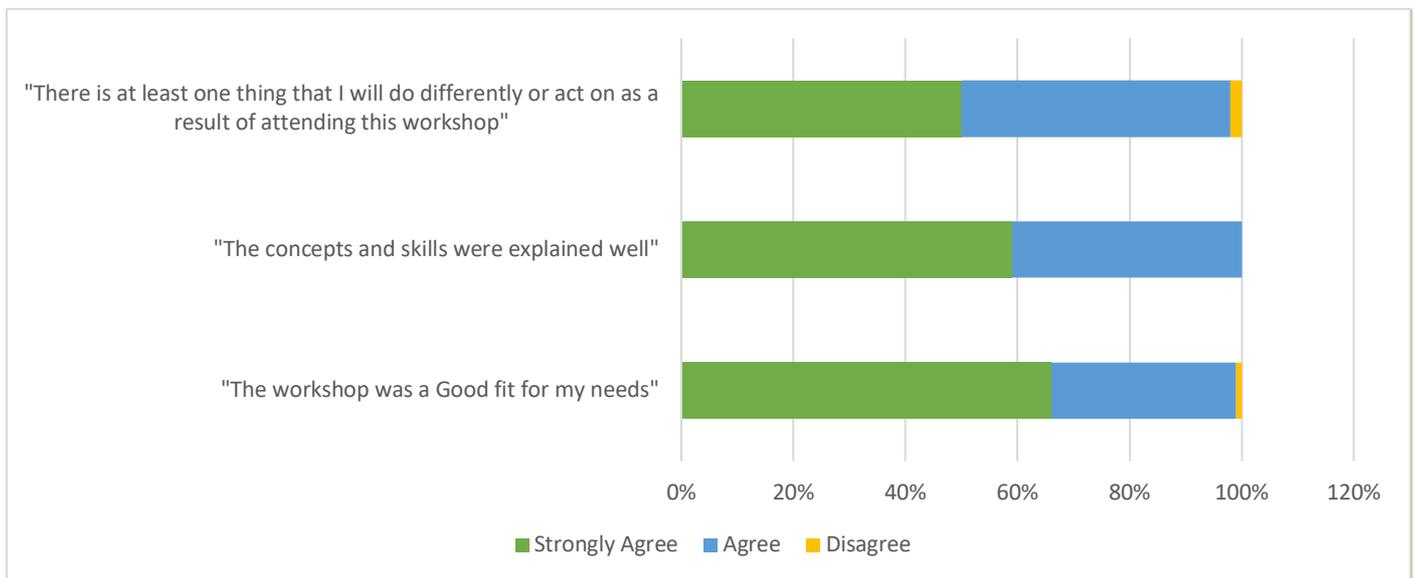


Feedback

Participants registered and attended for many reasons as seen below:



We then asked participants their agreement with the following statements:



We asked participants what they have learnt and how they will act differently after attending this workshop.

The answers were extremely positive. Many of the researchers mentioned that from now they will involve and engage community and stakeholders from the start of the proposal development, make sure the study participants will benefit from the findings at the end of the research and clearly explain to them all the risks, side effect (if any) before proceeding to enroll them in the study.

Also, several participants stated that henceforth they will apply the universal principals more seriously and ensure the highest ethical standards clearance before conducting research “no matter how desperate the situation is”.

Moreover, participants have expressed that the workshop was useful to improve their knowledge on ethics and the importance of contextualizing the ethical principles according to the values and the moral of each country.

It was also very satisfying to read that the workshop was a motivation for several participants to connect with other researchers and create group to deal with ethical issues.

Participants gave us suggestions on what we should change for future workshops:

The main suggestions revolved around time: many would have liked to hear more from each speaker and more time for discussion among them, and a large number suggested doing this workshop periodically. Satisfaction with the breakout sessions was high, and several participants have proposed that in a future workshop they should last longer.

On the other hand, some pointed out that they would like us to encourage students to participate as well, as they are the future researchers.

Also, what we should continue doing:

What was a pleasant surprise for the workshop participants, and what most of them highlighted, was not only the professionalism and experience of the speakers, but also the plurality of nationalities and backgrounds. Also, the audience was grateful for the presence of institutions that have already made a significant contribution to research capacity strengthening and community engagement.

To continue with the live interpretation and break-out room sessions was suggested, and as mentioned before, there was a high demand for having this workshop periodically.

We finally asked participants, if the following development opportunities were available, which ones they would be interested on:

